Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

UPDATE

Spring 1996 Vol. 1 No. 11

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological Projects, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048, (212) 432-5707, for the purpose of providing current information on New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context.

Editor In Chief: Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D

Senior Editor/
Design & Layout: Emilyn L. Brown

Editors: Marie-Alice Devieux
Deborah Wright

Contributors: Steve B. Harper
Tamara R. Jubilee
Tamara Kelly
Dr. Edna Medford
Chadra D. Pittman
Dr. Joseph Reidy
Ruth Rose
Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson

In This Issue...

OPEI's Anniversary: A Question of Time

Emilyn L. Brown

New York's African Burial Ground is a powerful example of how questions and answers provide opportunities for growth. From its recovery in 1991, to the scientific analysis currently underway, the cemetery and the men, women and children buried there, have generated deep concerns and questions critical to its preservation: Why was the site violated? How could it remain hidden over the centuries? What role did Africans play in the building of New York City?

Since our official opening in May of 1993, we've attempted to address these concerns by developing in-house and off-site presentations, annual educational symposiums, open house events, and a quarterly newsletter. OPEI's small staff has been helped along the way by an intrepid group of volunteers currently numbering 80. In total, we've reached more than 50,000 individuals and institutions across the country and overseas to gain support for the site.

In this, the fourth and final year of our contract, we've noticed that questions about the site have begun to reflect more challenging concerns. The focus has shifted to the scientific and historical data forthcoming from Howard University. Dr. Michael Blakey, scientific director of the project, expects to be able to present an evaluation of diet, life-style, even the African origins of this burial population within a short time **(see Update No. 10)**. In this issue, the goals of future historical research that will accompany the scientific data, is offered in **"The African Burial Ground in Historical Perspective,"** by Dr. Edna Medford of Howard University. The history of New York's early African population is also discussed in **African American Beginnings**, written by OPEI Director, Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson. Informative and timely, this fifth segment in a series **(see Update issues 6, 7, and 9)** centers on the post-revolutionary war era and addresses the economic life of African Americans in early New York.

Finally, OPEI's goal to link past and future recently came to fruition. At a Youth Symposium held in March 1996, we posed the question: How do we secure a prominent place in national and international history for the men, women and children buried in the African Burial Ground? The enthusiastic response of attendees, captured in the photo essay, **Passing the Torch (see pages 10-11)**, assures us that it's just a question of time.

"I want the bones to speak to me in ways that make it possible for me to...tell my grandchildren marvelous stories about their ancestors..." **Ossie Davis, from the documentary: "The African Burial Ground: An American Discovery"**

(((LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (((

Children Speak

...Thank you for showing us around in the Laboratory. Thank you for letting us look at the cases and explaining what they are. Thank you for letting us touch the wooden pipes and tobacco.

Sincerely,
Brandon Matias,P.S. 91Q

Heartfelt Support

My journey into the community brought me face to face with many who were not aware of the findings of our ancestors. They were not aware that the entire Wall Street area was resting on the backs of their grandparents. Sadly to say, many didn't even care.

I hadn't been to the site of excavation nor to Lehman College, but within my very spirit, I feel the tears, lost hopes and fears that our ancestors felt; along with the fear of never being able to return home to what once was. Watching a recent Channel 13 special on the African Burial Ground I first witnessed my ancestors graves being disturbed and their bones being moved into a holding pen, similar to what once was used to hold them as slaves.
I could not help but to cry.

I want to offer my voluntary support in helping, in any way possible, to educate the masses on the importance of this historical find, along with the importance of the recognition of our heritage as Africans, their descendants in the Americas. It does not matter what part of the globe one is located..., the awakening of our ancestors from their resting place are quiet words that must be heard by all...

MaryAn Tamu Posey

Researching the Past

I am writing to thank you for sending me the information packet on the African Burial Ground in Manhattan. It has a number of articles that I was unaware of and that I will put on reserve for my Archaeology of Death class. I'd also like to thank you for your support with the Kingston African Burial Ground. I think that this is an extremely important cultural, historical, and archaeological site. I'll keep you informed of any major developments. Thanks again.

Sincerely,
Joseph E. Diamond

Spreading the Word in L.A.

I sincerely thank you for the information sent to me related to the Afro-American burial ground. The information has helped me to begin research in restoring our rich history. I have shared the newsletters with several organizations here in the Los Angeles area.

Gratefully yours,
Roger Higgenbotham

On behalf of the students from the Sociology of Slavery class at the Center for Workers Education who attended the presentation at OPEI on April 18, 1996, I would like to thank you for a most exciting and informative experience. I think that the other students would agree with me that this project is a necessary avenue to a greater understanding of our African ancestors who came to America...We plan to meet at the burial site at 290 Broadway and hold a brief ceremony. We will then proceed to the auditorium on the sixth floor of the Center where each student will read a slave testimonial. This is our way of honoring our ancestors and supporting the African Burial Ground project.

Danielle Knight-Alexander

A Gift of Pride

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the men and women who made possible the lecture on the African Burial Grounds here at Wallkill Correctional Facility...

I have an aunt who always says that everything happens for a reason. If she is right, and I think that she is, then the discovery of these burials were meant to bring together people of African descent at a time when we need it most. I think that this discovery can be seen as a gift from our ancestors to us. Through their remains they are giving us a deep pride in our heritage and greatness as a people. This discovery helps to prove they were not just field laborers in North America as we are made to believe, but many were skilled men and women who worked with iron and wood and were brought here for that reason. They were a people with a proud culture that was maintained through their struggle. Judging by the burials (beads, positions, etc.) they brought this culture with them from the Motherland.

Sincerely,
Raymond Tysinger

OPEI welcomes letters but due to limited space reserves the right to edit for length and clarity.

NOTES FROM THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY

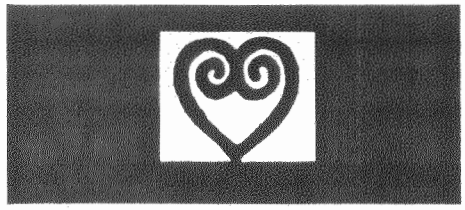
Placing the African Burial Ground in Historical Perspective

Drs. Edna Medford and Joseph Reidy

The historians working with the African Burial Ground Project aim to provide a unique and invaluable perspective to the study of black New Yorkers. They will facilitate a greater understanding of the lives of the eighteenth century people interred in the cemetery by 1) placing evidence from the archaeological and biological-anthropological research in the appropriate historical context; and 2) studying the population within the broader context of the African diaspora which resulted from the Atlantic slave trade and the growth of European colonial settlements in the Americas. From this perspective, the historians can best delineate the process by which black New Yorkers experienced the cultural transformation from Africans to African Americans.

As the diasporic approach suggests, the historical researchers are guided by the understanding that a significant proportion of the black population in colonial New York consisted of the African born and those who either had originated in or had been brought to the Caribbean before living and laboring in the colony. Doubtless, their earlier experience shaped their response to the conditions and circumstances they encountered once they arrived in New York. Hence, the historians are considering questions of diet, disease, labor, trade, customs (especially those related to death and interment), and relationships within various social networks in specific African societies. They will focus as well on the dietary, epidemiological, social, economic and cultural backgrounds of relevant societies in the Caribbean.

Preliminary dating of artifacts removed from the cemetery suggests a likely time of burial as the middle to the late eighteenth century. This follows the period of greatest importation of enslaved Africans into New York.



Historians estimate that between 1701 and 1774, approximately 2,800 captives arrived in the city directly from Africa. During the same period, as many as 4,000 entered New York from various points in the Americas, especially from the West Indies. Given the nature of the slave trade, one can conclude that many of those comprising this latter group were African-born as well.

One of the greatest challenges for the historians will be to reconstruct the ethnic origins of persons born in Africa. Evidence suggests that a few hundred of those imported directly from the Continent arrived from Madagascar, but most came from the slaving regions of West Africa, especially the Guinea and Gold Coasts, and from Angola. Consultation with specialists in the economic and political history of west and central Africa will permit a comparison of their findings on the early eighteenth century sources of captives with what the colonial New York records indicate, thus providing historical reference points for better understanding the ethnic origins of those interred in the African Burial Ground.

Given the level of slave importations in the eighteenth century, it is likely that African cultural forms figured prominently in the lives of Black colonial New Yorkers. Earlier studies suggest that African beliefs and customs found expression in names like Quaco, Quashi, Cuffee, and Madagascar Jack; in such practices as sealing rebellious pacts with blood oaths; and in relying on spiritual figures to provide rebels with magical powder aimed at ensuring invulnerability.

African culture survived in modified forms as well. Severed from the various associative groupings common in African society, black New Yorkers created new ones. Black men organized themselves into residential groupings such as the Long Bridge Boys in the southwest part of the city and the Smith's Fly Boys in the northeast end. Both groups socialized in the local taverns, contrary to law, and were implicated in the alleged conspiracy of 1741.

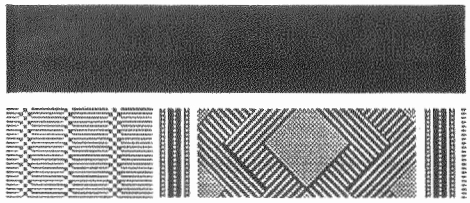
Such groups constitute a significant focal point in the effort to sort out the African and African American identity.

No other institution occupied as central a place in the process of cultural development and transformation as the family. The comparatively small number of women, during the early years especially, inhibited the formation of stable family structures. Over time, other difficulties, including the nature of urban life and labor, where there were often only one or two enslaved Africans per household and where husbands might be separated from their wives and children, inhibited sustained family relationships as well. The significance of family in traditional African society dictated that enslaved Africans find ways to circumvent these obstacles.

In addition to understanding the internal cultural dynamics of African-New Yorker society, the historians also seek to understand the African impact on the larger experience of the colony. As labor was central to the lives of both enslaved and free people of color, the historians will ask specific questions concerning work experiences, particularly as such activities relate to gender, age and their permanent imprint on the skeletal remains. In the latter instance, an effort will be made to determine the extent to which certain physiological abnormalities resulted from the exploitative methods common in slave societies or reflected cultural practices whose origin predated the New York experience.

In the area of resistance, black New Yorkers found ways to circumvent a legal code that defined them as property if enslaved and forced into a position inferior to whites if free. In so doing, they constantly pushed against and frequently crossed over the boundaries established to contain them.

A significant body of literature exists concerning black New Yorkers' resistance to enslavement, especially the 1712 revolt and the alleged conspiracy of 1741. Less effort has been directed toward examining daily forms of defiance: running away, theft, arson, socializing in public, or buying and selling goods without the consent of the owner.



The historians will examine these forms of resistance and will explore the dichotomy between restrictive legal codes and the realities of black life in colonial New York.

Adaptation to the conditions and circumstances within which they found themselves propelled black New Yorkers along the path from Africans to African Americans. The disruption of traditional institutions as a consequence of slavery forced them to either modify African ways or create new structures. Only by examining this process can we hope to fully appreciate the experiences of those interred in the African Burial Ground.

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African Burial Ground Update

o Status of African Burial Ground Stamp Campaign
From its inception in June of 1994, the African Burial Ground commemorative stamp campaign has had a two-fold mission. As one of the last resolutions proposed by the former Federal Steering Committee, its primary aim was to commemorate those buried in the African Burial Ground. Its secondary impact was educational, reminding a concerned public of the significance of the site involving those who were unaware of all the issues. Recently, 85,000 signatures were submitted to the U.S. postal service with the support of OPEI. More than 100,000 signatures (and still counting!) have been collected, representing overwhelming support from concerned citizens across the country and the world. The 100,000 signature goal was proposed after CSAC's initial rejection of 20,000 signatures. Strategies are now being planned in anticipation of a meeting tentatively scheduled for the fall.
(See Community Voices)

o **Our next Volunteer Symposium** is scheduled for July 20th. If you're interested in becoming involved with the African Burial Ground project, please call **212.432.5707** and ask for our Volunteer Coordinators Deborah Wright or Donna Cole.

Related Matters:

o **Cemeteries unearthed across the country**

Wilmington Delaware's Mother UAME Church, one of the city's oldest African American congregations, is currently in negotiation with MBNA America, the largest banking firm in Delaware. The bank's purchase of the church property on French Street involves an adjoining cemetery established in 1855, prior to the existing church structure. The cemetery has not been in use for some time, but is believed to be the final resting place for an estimated 300 burials. MBNA 's plans to erect an office building at the site would enable them to expand their services.

According to the State of Delaware Unmarked Human Burial Act, whenever excavation results in the recovery of burials "they must be identified, re-moved, treated and relocated." This responsibility is currently being carried out by the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office. Based on newspaper reports, it appears that church members have complied with the edict. Lack of funds to restore and repair its current structure, built in 1882, coupled with the bank's purchase of surrounding property, appear to have influenced the church's decision. Monies received by the church will be used to purchase space elsewhere. Following final church services on May 7th, a reburial service will be held at Mt. Pisgah, also a UAME church, in Summit, Delaware.
East Baltimore, Md. Recently two cemeteries were recovered by the Baltimore Center for Urban Archaeology (BCUA) between June and November 1995. The cemeteries were located beneath the parking lots of John Hopkins Hospital campus. Ironically, one of the cemeteries served the relatively wealthy Christ Episcopal Church from 1800 to 1852. The other was used as the city's Potter's Field from 1793 until some time in the 1830s.

According to the Council for Northeast Archaeology, "The Potter's Field was founded in 1793 as a result of a campaign by concerned city residents and commissioners. Letters to a local newspaper in the early 1790s indicate that the poorer residents of Baltimore were often unable to pay for a burial space for their deceased relatives and friends. Instead, they had resorted to burying their dead under the public streets and alleys of the city...It is probable that this cemetery continued in use until the 1830s." No identifying records have been found. Following excavation, the area is slated to become the future site of a John Hopkins cancer care facility.

o **Artifacts from the Five Points** excavation portion of the Foley Square Archaeological Project are currently on display at the U.S. Court House building at 500 Pearl Street. Viewing hours for this exhibit is 8:30 - 5:00 p.m.

o **The Negros Burial Ground**, a libretto written by Ann Greene and directed by Dominick Taylor, had a brief run at The Kitchen at 512 West 19th Street. During its limited run, the play encountered sharp criticism from concerned citizens whose activism around the African Burial Ground included having the name of the cemetery changed to reflect what historically, Africans called themselves.

Sankofa: Learning from the past to build the future

ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?
Please submit names and/or corrections to
OPEI, 6 World Trade Center, U.S. Custom House,
Rm. 239, New York, New York 10048

AFRICAN AMERICAN BEGINNINGS - - Part 5 of 6

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D

Africans, enslaved and free living in 18th and early 19th century New York City faced numerous challenges—systematic discrimination, segregation, economic disenfranchisement, and poverty. With little doubt, it maybe speculated that one of the greatest challenges that faced Africans living in New York was the ability to earn a living.

By the end of the 18th century, New York's African population had shifted from a majority of enslaved people to a majority of free Africans. This shift resulted from two chief sources: the participation of African men on both sides of the American revolutionary conflict, and individual manumissions within the city and state of New York (Gilje & Rock, 1992:208, Wilson 1994).

The economic life of enslaved and free Black New Yorkers was one described by historians of the period as primarily consisting of menial and unskilled labor. (See Compendium of the Seventh U.S. Census). The majority of free Africans were employed in the lowest level occupations, with earnings that dictated that they would long remain at the bottom of New York's economic hierarchy. Leonard Curry notes, "Free Blacks were among the poorest of the poor, and they appear rarely to have been credited with any personal property except retail merchandise.." (1981:38)

"In employment, as in transportation, discrimination was customary. The refusal of the whites to let Negroes work with them often forced the colored artisans to accept menial occupations..." wrote Robert Ernst. Africans by custom and convention, held the lowest paying jobs with men working in a variety of labor intensive work and women generally employed as domestic workers. (See Wilson's The Good Works of African American Women in UPDATE issues 3 and 4 for information specifically on women).

"Approximately four in ten adult male free blacks worked as either mariners or day laborers in the first decade of the 19th century. These men quickly and easily exchanged occupations.

" Education and training had little impact on what chances Africans had in a competitive labor market. Opportunities in the trades and professions were severely limited. Even the graduates of the African Free Schools found doors closed to them when they tried to enter the trades."

They might ship out to sea for several months, return to port to find some job as a day laborer for awhile, and then change positions again." (Gilje & Rock 1992:310). Twenty percent or more of the mariners shipping out of New York's ports were men of African descent (Hodges 1989, Wilson 1994).

Education and training had little impact on what chances Africans had in a competitive labor market. Opportunities in the trades and professions were severely limited. Even the graduates of the African Free Schools found doors closed to them when they tried to enter the trades (Walker:1994).

Despite the blatant and pervasive discrimination and racism of the period, Africans managed to dominate certain food related industries. The most outstanding examples are documented in the person and institution of Thomas Downing (Downing Oyster House at Broad Street), Cato's Tavern at 51st Street, Thomas Van Renesselaer's Refractory on Wall Street, and Catherine Ferguson's Pastry Shop on Thompson Street (Hewitt 1993, Wilson 1994).

John Hewitt reconstructs Downings' professional life within the context of the larger African American entrepreneurial framework. He writes: "When Downing became a New York oysterman, he entered a business conducted primarily by other free black men. It had been noted that in 1810, only nine years before his arrival in the city, of the twenty-seven oystermen listed in the city directory, at least sixteen were free African Americans. Right from the start, Downing thus found himself up against established and successful competitors" (1993:240).

The Staten Island African American community of Sandy Ground which was not officially a part of New York City until 1894, were also prominent in the oystering business as early as 1830 (Jackson:1995).

The African American restauranteur in 19th century New York was the exception, and not the common place experience. More typical displays of Africans in the food industry could be found in

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the open markets and on street corners of the city. Corn selling women, and men selling farm produce, straw brooms and other food commodities characterized the economic outlets that were available for Africans living in N.Y. Among the other businesses run by Black New Yorkers in the 19th century were grocery stores, including one owned and operated by black women, boot shops, Thomas Jennings' cleaners and second hand clothing store at 110 Nassau Street and David Ruggles' grocery store at 36 Cortland Street (Wilson 1995, Freeman 1994).

According to Rhoda Freeman, "There were several grocery stores at least one china shop, and a great number of boarding houses, run by Negroes. Others established dry good stores" (1994:209).

Freemen also noted that, "In the professions there were at least two men practicing dentistry at this time, John Burdell and G. H. White. James McCune Smith practiced medicine and kept an apothecary shop first, at 93 North Moore Street, and later at 55 West Broadway" (1994:208). Additionally, a Dr. Ives also, an African American practiced medicine in New York City in the 1830's. Neither doctor served a segregated clientele.

Given the difficulties faced by the New York free African population during the late 18th century and early 19th century, the accomplishments of a few noted individuals are truly impressive. The overwhelming realities for the ordinary folks by comparison however, prevail in portraying and characterizing the life and death of early African New Yorkers as harsh, and impoverished. In the minds of many this historical depiction continues today, to serve as a little debated, portrayal of contemporary African American life in New York City.

For a list of 19th century occupations held by African Americans see page 9

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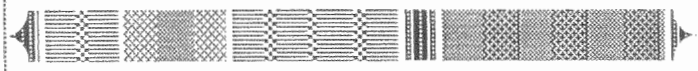
Community Voices



Compiled by Chadra D. Pittman

In March of 1996, we learned that a second request for a commemorative stamp had been rejected two months earlier in January. Adding insult to injury, a scheduled meeting with CSAC to facilitate discussion of this issue has been postponed until the fall. In light of these circumstances, we pose the following question to our readers: ***What strategies do you think would add weight to the request for an African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp?***

Augustus Temple III-
Concerned postal worker/community activist
I am very optimistic that the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp will become a reality. What we are witnessing is a test of our ability and our endurance. We must continue to spread the vision and organize! organize! organize! The more people that get involved in the struggle for a Commemorative Stamp, the better. We need the public to pressure the CSAC and the post master general into realizing the significance and importance of having the stamp. A lot of people are unaware that we have been rejected for a second time. We have to get the word out. There is strength in numbers. Someone will have the solution, the key to unlock the door. Possibly, there could be some sort of contest, with prizes, for a design of a stamp. We could contact some notable contemporary Black artists as well as community people to get involved in this effort.

Since we've been rejected twice, we need to come to CSAC with concrete ideas and give them something to think about. They need to know that we have a plan and are serious. We will get a stamp eventually. We must remember, there is no progress without struggle!!

Paul H. Brock, Landmarks Harlem
Letters need to be sent to CSAC individually, so that you have individuals following up with the board, demanding responses to their inquiries. We need to find out the reasons why they have rejected a Commemorative Stamp for the second time. Community people need to complain to their Congressman and also need to alert their local elected officials asking them to lend their support. There needs to be broad community support to prepare to present this to CSAC. The key is to acquire political and community support. Petitions are important and letters are also valuable. Yet having officials behind your efforts takes on a different weight. Contacting congressman, local officials, the new congressional delegation, along with those on the CSAC Committee, all those parties together will turn the decision in favor of obtaining a Commemorative Stamp for the African Burial Ground.

Portia George,
Concerned Citizen
Former Production Assistant for "Sankofa"
I am so disappointed that the stamp has been rejected for the second time. I feel that to have a Commemorative Stamp for the African Burial Ground is an absolute must. Possibly what we need is a celebrity to come forth to be the voice behind this campaign to bring it further into the community at large. We need to get some media people involved to spread the word and have a spokesperson for the stamp. We all need to give back to our ancestors that paved the way and the celebrities are no different, they too need to give back. Surely we would not be where we are today had it not been for our ancestors. We should attempt to get someone internationally known, not just someone familiar to New York's community but the world at large. I simply can't believe that we've been rejected again. There is so much work that needs to be done. This rejection is another slap in the face and we are not taking it lying down.

Diane Francis
Physician's Liaison/Community Activist
What we need is a political godfather or godmother to vent our sentiments with regard to attaining the Commemorative Stamp. Like Gus Savage supported the African Burial Ground Project, we need a spokesperson to champion the cause, someone who understands the importance of having a Commemorative Stamp. With Congressional support, they could then initiate a lobbying effort to the CSAC. We need to find out who is on the Committee, an insider who could push the issue and apply pressure from the inside.

We need to identify some of the major media and touch the National news to make a case for the Burial Ground stamp. We could hone in on a columnist that could write and exploit the travesty of having the stamp rejected. We need someone who could express the historical significance and demonstrate how ethnically relevant the stamp is, greater than that of Elvis Presley, who has been memorialized on a stamp.

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We could contact an artist associated with the project that is willing to create a design for the Commemorative Stamp. Possibly, we could contact Otto Neals, a respected, renowned and nationally recognized artist (who worked for the postal service). We need to secure an artist interested in being a part of the process to obtain the stamp.

Lastly, we need to express to CSAC and the US Postal Service that we would support the stamp once it is created. One of the reasons why Elvis's stamp came to fruition is because the supporters are buying it. Graceland makes money. CSAC needs to know that we will support an African Burial Ground Stamp. They need to be secure they will make money.

Kahlil Shaw
Actor/Musician

Possibly another strategy that we could tap into is the media. We should contact all major publications, all of the major Black magazines like Jet, Ebony Man, Essence and network with them so that they will lend their support. We should also contact the major radio stations that African Americans tune in to like 98.7 and WBLS. If in some way we could express our concerns and our goal in achieving a Commemorative Stamp, we could put even more pressure on CSAC and the U.S. Postal Service to approve the stamp. These publications and the radio waves touch so many people in the community. We could spread the word, to those that don't know, that there is an African Burial Ground that lies in lower Manhattan and ask for support for the stamp. We need to flood the mediums where Black people spend their time and money. Once the awareness is aroused, we'll have an even greater chance of attaining our goal. u^u

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To contact CSAC to voice your opinion regarding the Commemorative Stamp for the African Burial Ground, please write:

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260-2437

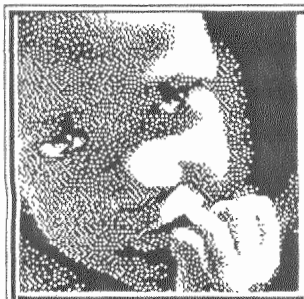
For additional addresses of local and state representatives please call 212.432.5707

AN OCCUPATIONAL SURVEY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN NEW YORK 1827-1860

1144 Laborers
808 Servants
434 Mariners
122 Barbers
107 Coachmen
95 Cooks
44 Stewards
39 Carmen
33 Butchers
28 Boatmen
24 Farmers
24 Musicians
23 Shoemakers
21 Ministers
21 Boarding House Keepers
12 Carpenters
12 Sextons
11 Hostlers
9 Doctors
8 Teachers
8 Cigar Makers
7 Clerks
7 Gardeners
5 Ink Makers
4 Bakers
4 Printers
3 Barkeepers
3 Druggists
3 Jewelers
3 Merchants
2 Apprentices
2 Confectioners
2 Merchants ("generally")
1 Blacksmith
1 Gunsmith
1 Student

Also 207 other occupations
(sweeps, scavengers. etc.)

Source: J.D.B. DeBow,
Statistical View of the United States...
Compendium of the Seventh Census
(Washington, D.C.), 80-81



PASSING THE TORCH
THE NEW YORK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND YOUTH SYMPOSIUM 1996

Text: Deborah A. Wright
Photos: Tamara R. Jubilee

"The knowledge of who we are as individuals is essential. But that knowledge can never be complete without knowing our origins as a people. Passing on that knowledge to our children assures our future." These words, spoken by Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, OPEI Director, expressed the organizing force behind OPEI's Youth Symposium, held on March 23, 1996. Over two hundred youth from the New York/New Jersey area, were addressed by Weeksville Director Joan Maynard on the importance of young people understanding their history.

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, OPEI Director introduces the program's theme to an inter-generational audience of more than 200. In explaining the value of history, she also outlined the role children can play in preserving it.

This ideal of self-empowerment was achieved by providing the youthful attendees with an opportunity to dialogue with and pose questions to the presenters. Mark Mack, Director at Howard University's Montague J. Cobb Laboratory gave a scientific analysis of the ancestral remains removed from the site. A historic overview was presented by OPEI Public Educator, Marie-Alice Devieux.

At an emotional prayer vigil held at the African Burial Ground site, attendees were encouraged to express their sentiments for those buried at the site. Cards bearing personal messages of commitment, acknowledgments of past suffering, and of contributions made by the African Burial Ground ancestors, decorated the fence that encloses the site. Tours of the 290 Broadway building where related artwork is on display were also offered as part of the days events.

By the day's end, many of the youth who attended the Symposium were so moved by the information presented, that they elected to become official volunteers for the project.

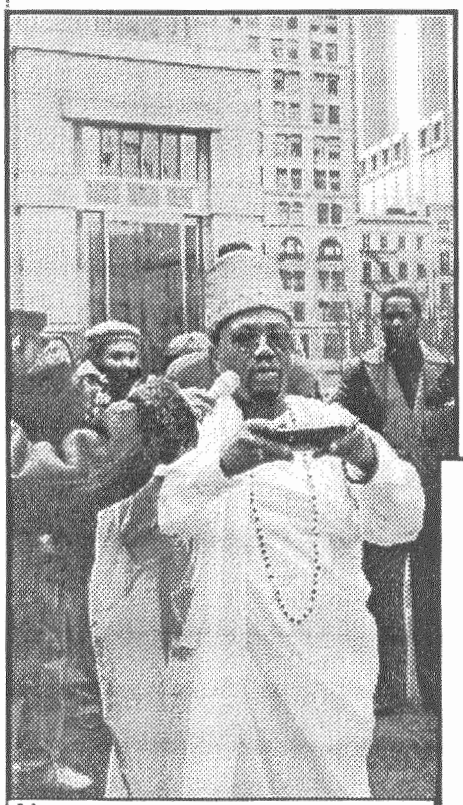
Joan Maynard, Director of the Weeksville Society and the symposium's keynote speaker, was presented with flowers as a gesture of thanks for her commitment to the historic preservation of Weeksville. Ms. Maynard was also a member of the former Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground.

Group forms a circle to offer prayers for those buried at the site.

" It gives me a lot of joy to know that what people have given to me, I can pass on to the very young.That's the best feeling in the world. There's nothing to compare."

Joan Maynard
Director of the
Weeksville Society,

Poet & OPEI volunteer Marla Johnson & granddaughter



Above:
Nii Akotwei, High Priest in the Ga Spiritual Tradition pours a libation for the African ancestors buried at the site. **Right**: Joan Maynard encourages youth to empower themselves through history.

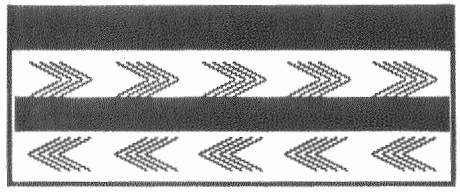
Foley Square Lab Report:

THE FATHER MATHEW CUP FROM FIVE POINTS: THE MAN BEHIND THE CUP

Tamara Kelly

One of the most exciting artifacts recovered from the Five Points archaeological site was a transfer-printed ceramic teacup with the image of Father Theobald Mathew administering the Total Abstinence Pledge to an audience of devout and awe-struck listeners. The inside of the cup pictures a beehive, with a shovel, rake and hoe around it and the inscription "Temperance and Industry...Industry Pays Debts." The cup was manufactured in Staffordshire, England by William Adams and Sons between 1820 and 1840. Because there are no wear patterns or stir marks on the interior of the cup, it is likely that it was used as an ornament in one of the tenement households at 472 Pearl Street (see Fig. 1).

Father Mathew, an Irish priest of the Capuchin order, was one of the foremost advocates and supporters of the Temperance movement. He was a pious and caring priest who was well respected, loved and revered in Ireland and abroad. He believed, like many other 19th century reformers, that hard work and temperance (abstinence from alcohol) contributed to leading a spiritual, morally upright, and decent life. The Five Points, where the teacup was found, was a 19th century working-class neighborhood that has been portrayed as a den for thieves, prostitutes, drunkards, and an array of pursuants of lewd, immoral and licentious behavior (Foster 1990:120). The presence of this cup at the site suggests that some of the inhabitants, at least, were not as ribald as written accounts of the neighborhood lead readers to believe.



Those Irish immigrants in New York who had taken the pledge in Ireland probably kept it very dear to their hearts. In any case, at least one Irish family living in the neighborhood adhered to Father Mathew's admonition that working hard and staying sober would enable them to lead respectable lives.

Nevertheless, assigning the misnomer "temperance" to the movement can be a bit misleading. Within the temperance movement there were a number of divisions producing two schools of thought. Some advocates purported that individuals should abstain from drinking alcohol, while others believed that alcohol should be used in moderation. The latter believed that it was permissible to drink beer, but all hard liquor should be avoided. Although there is no definite date for the movement, "general attacks on drunkenness began to be focused into an organized temperance movement in the 1820's" (Riley 1991:260).

As director of the city workhouse in Cork County, Ireland, "the chief scene of his labors," Father Mathew saw the ill effects of drunkenness on some of its inhabitants (Maguire 1864:98). John Francis Maguire, Father Mathew's illustrious biographer and friend, described the Cork workhouse as a place "in which the poor waifs and strays of society, the wretched and the broken-down, the victims of their own folly, or of the calamities, accidents, and vicissitudes of life, found a miserable home" (Maguire 1864:98). The workhouse was a haven for drunkards, the orphans of drunkards, and the sick. According to Maguire, Father Mathew observed people in the town's mental asylums, hospitals, and jails who were slaves of passion or second-hand victims to the "destructive vice," alcohol (Maguire 1864:99).

This scene disturbed Father Mathew greatly, but never did it enter his mind that he should associate himself with the current temperance movement which was in its developmental stages. On the board of directors at the workhouse with Father Mathew was a man by the name of William Martin, a Quaker.

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Commenting upon the disconcerting scene at the workhouse and other institutions, he mentioned to Father Mathew "Strong drink is the cause of this" and pleaded with him to give assistance to the fledgling movement (Mathew 1864:99).

There had been earlier attempts made to rid Cork of intemperance, "and bring the working classes to believe in the virtue of sobriety" (Maguire 1864:99). In addition to the Quaker, William Martin, men like Nicholas Dunscombe, a Protestant clergyman, and Richard Dowden, a Unitarian, worked with great zeal and enthusiasm to win converts to abstinence (Maguire 1864:99). To no avail, their labors did not persuade a substantial number of people to modify their drinking habits. During the 19th-century many temperance societies were run by clergymen or "wealthy evangelical laymen" (Walters 1978:131). These men were looked upon as fanatics. A platform which supported total abstinence was absurd and ridiculous to people. Moderation was thought to be a more realistic goal than abstinence. Needless to say, many temperance advocates before Father Mathew were dismissed and laughed at.

After much soul-searching, Father Mathew told Martin that he would assume a leadership position in the Temperance movement at Cork. After all, he was loved all over Ireland, and he was Catholic. The majority of the Irish were Catholic, and they did not support the other temperance leaders because they believed that they were trying to win converts to Protestantism. However, for Father Mathew to take on such a large task would have enormous ramifications. Father Mathew knew that if he joined the movement he would have to totally denounce alcohol. At one time he believed that moderation, which he practiced, along with many of his friends for religious and social reasons, was tolerable. For many, alcohol became a staple drink during the 19th century because there were not many "'safe non-alcoholic thirst quenchers'" (Riley 1991:260). Drinking water was scarce and often contaminated, and although "tea, coffee and chocolate were getting cheaper," they were still more expensive than alcohol (Riley 1991:260). A vast majority of people believed that alcohol supplied individuals with extra energy to complete physical tasks (Riley 1991:260).

Fig. 1. The Father Mathew Cup

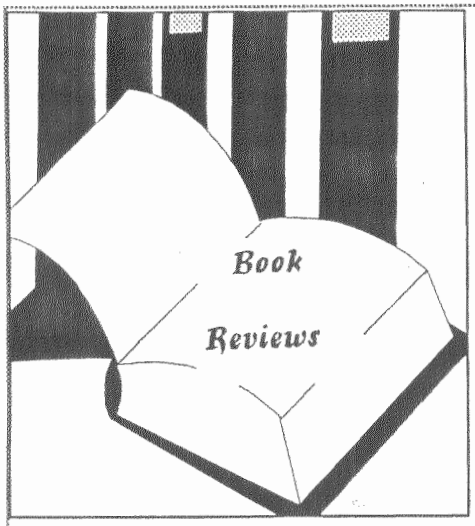
Urging the people of Ireland to stop drinking alcohol would mean that many distilleries would be put out of business. This was a problem for Father Mathew because he knew of friends and family members that owned some of the breweries and distilleries.

Their families were able to live off of this income and they contributed to charities. His family and friends would be greatly affected by his decision. Nevertheless, after alerting Martin that he wanted to start a temperance society in Cork, he summoned other temperance supporters to his home on April 10, 1838. It was here, at the age of 47, that he, along with these men, took the following pledge "'I promise to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, except used medicinally, and by order of a medical man, and to discountenance the cause and practice of intemperance'" (Mathew 1890:35).

When news spread to the town, many wondered if Father Mathew had gone mad or if he let the persistent temperance advocates put him up to it. In many cases he was pitied. Anti-temperance sentiment was high among the rich, but the poor thronged to his meeting because they trusted him. After telling them that God would help them to keep the pledge, which was a difficult one, they gave him their word. Many of the men that joined the society were ashamed that they had let alcohol control their lives. Those who drank to excess were surprised that after they took the pledge they felt better physically. Father Mathew became known as a healer of the sick because many of the members who had maladies related to drinking began to feel and look better. The Society began to grow, and Father Mathew administered the pledge to hundreds of thousands of people within the first year.

Father Mathew's movement soon spread throughout Ireland and he developed "temperance reading rooms in every town; in connection with them he arranged courses of industrial and literary education" (Mathew 1890:44). He also developed a debating society within his temperance institute. The movement to him, was against ignorance, intolerance and vice (Mathew 1890:44). Not only did his fame spread throughout Ireland, but it also spread throughout Scotland, England and America (U.S. Catholic Historical Society 1911:111). Father Mathew was invited to spread his temperance message throughout the United States by several American bishops. John Hughes, the Irish-born bishop of

(Continued on page 15)



Book: The Encyclopedia of New York City
Publisher: Yale University Press, 1350 pp, $65.00
Author: Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed.
Reviewer: Ruth Rose

The Encyclopedia of New York City, edited by Kenneth T. Jackson, is a comprehensive reference book about the City of New York, containing over 4300 entries by 650 contributors. Jackson's aim is to index basic information about New York. Entries are factually dense and concisely written. Each is referenced through citations providing suggestions for more extensive research.

The joy of this volume is that a purposeful effort has been made to include all participants who have been and are a part of the New York experience. As a result, there are many references to the contributions made by women, Africans and African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and various immigrant groups. Chronologically, the encyclopedia covers the prehistoric period to the present including the inhabits of all five boroughs even though the boroughs, as we learn, did not become incorporated into the city until 1898.

Another notable feature of this volume is the inclusion of public information which is not easily found in one source. A good example of this is a listing of the vote for the presidential candidates from the middle of the 19th century to the last election in 1992.

The Encyclopedia of New York City is of particular interest to African American scholars and researchers quite simply because it contains the most comprehensive inclusion of information about Africans and African Americans and their role and participation in every aspect of New York City life both colonial and post colonial. The alleged conspiracy by enslaved Africans to burn New York City down in 1741 is listed under "Negro Plot" (p.804) as well as the number of free and enslaved Africans in the population from 1790 though 1820. (p.1076) Included under immigration (p.581) is the number as well as the percent of Africans both free and enslaved to the total population. Compiling this in a single table makes it easy to read, and also highlights the statistical relationship. Moreover, they have selected African American contributors, experts in their field, to comment on related subjects. For example, the African Burial Ground entry is written by OPEI Director, Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson. There are also entries by T.J. Davis, professor of history and African American Studies, SUNY; Sule Greg Wilson, archivist, writer, educator and folklorist; Emilyn Brown, historical researcher for OPEI; Cynthia Copeland, former Public Educator for OPEI; Thelma Foote, former ethnohistorian for the Foley Square Project, and Joan Maynard, Director of the Weeksville Society in Brooklyn.

While this volume is an excellent reference source full of information about most aspects of New York City life, it has a few weaknesses which preclude it from being an easily accessible resource for the average student at elementary, secondary or college levels. It chief difficulty lies in its lack of more than one point of access; thus, making it only easy to use if one has prior knowledge about one's subject. The encyclopedia becomes much more problematic as a starting source when one has only the sketchiest of ideas about a topic. The volume appears to be geared primarily to librarians and scholars in spite of Jackson's assertion that this encyclopedia fills the need for both researchers and general readers. The lack of a thematic index greatly inhibits accessibility even though this omission is common among one volume reference texts. The encyclopedia becomes a wonderful source of information for general browsers. Used in this way one may learn important facts that may not be generally known nor remembered. I found it interesting to learn that The Nation magazine was launched in 1865 to support the causes of former enslaved Africans after the Civil War. (p.798) This purpose seems quite far from the mission of The Nation as we know it.

Therefore, if one only knows the general subject area it is not easy to locate the information without flipping through the entire volume to guess where the entry might be. In addition, some entries which seem to be of historical importance are not listed as separate entries, but only appear embedded in discussions which are relevant to them but which do not permit the user to find out detail about it.

A very good example of this is the treatment of the original inhabitants of what became New York City. Indigenous peoples are listed under the rubric of American Indian. The entry provides various information about American Indians and gives the names and origins of some of the ethnic affiliations, but it does not give information about the ethnic group itself. The Matinecocks are listed as the group which were involved in the sale of Manhattan Island, there is however, no ethnographic information about this group nor the salience of their presence and contribution to the workings and development of New York City. Moreover, there is no mention of Shinnecocks who to this day regard themselves as an American Indian ethnic group and who have participated in the development of New York City. Little is discussed also about the other groups, Canarsie, et al and the fact that so many of the place names of New York City are American Indian words. The omission of this kind of material weakens this volume and prevents it from being as roundly comprehensive as it should and could be.

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Father Mathew
(continued from page 13)

New York in 1842 until his death in 1864, was very instrumental in getting Father Mathew to come to the United States (Diver 1996:103).

Bishop Hughes sought to foster an "Irish American culture" which "blended Catholic piety, love of the Irish homeland, and American patriotism" (Diver 1996:103). Between 1845 and 1851, when a fungus destroyed Ireland's primary source of nutrition -- potato crops -- inhabitants either suffered and died, or left for America. When the "Great Potato Famine" sent many Irish immigrants to the United States, New York became one of the principal receiving areas (Foster 1988:319). There were a number of Irish people in New York before the famine, but during and after it, the Irish population increased manifold.

Bishop Hughes saw to it that "schools, hospitals, orphanages, banks, and benevolent associations" were established for them (Diver 1996:103).

In spite of health problems, Father Mathew sailed for America in the summer of 1849 (Maguire 1864: 461). While on the ship he heard confessions, administered the pledge, gave advice, and at times reached into his pocket to give money to those that didn't have any (Maguire 1864:461).

On July 2, 1849, his ship arrived in New York. When the ship pulled into the Bay of New York, there were a number of people, including Bishop Hughes, public officials and dignitaries, waiting to see him. Mayor Woodhull delivered the welcome address. There was a parade held in Father Mathew's honor, his fame in Ireland preceded him.

While in New York, Father Mathew was treated like a dignitary. The mayor let him use City Hall to receive guests in the morning, but often the rooms were so full that he had to set aside separate days to see men and women. Once again, although still very ill, he was administering the pledge to throngs of people from various religious and ethnic groups.

Father Mathew's visit to the United States helped reinforce the work of other Temperance societies. He traveled to Philadelphia, New Orleans, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Washington, D.C., Massachusetts and a number of other states, but throughout his stay, New York served as his headquarters.

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End of Part I

IN THE NEXT UPDATE:

- **The Man Behind The Cup Part II: Father Mathew and the issue of Slavery**
- **African American Beginnings (Part 6)**

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This will be the last copy of Update you will receive unless you verify your mailing address. Please complete the attached form and and return by fax or mail to:

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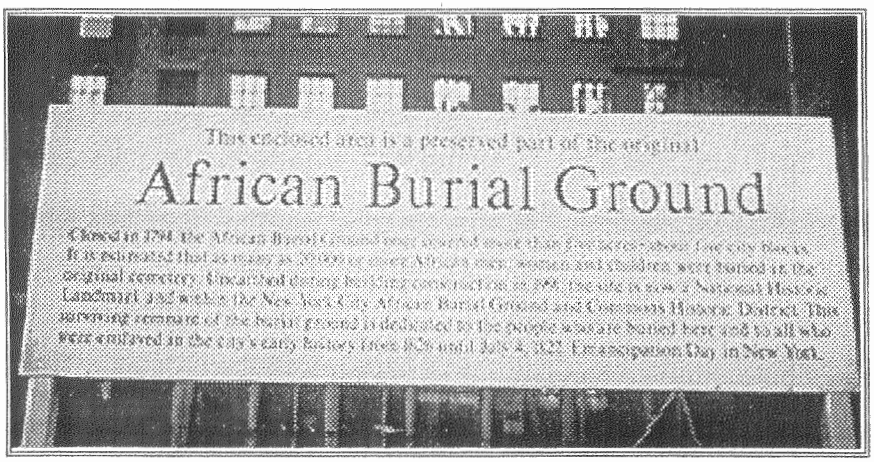
This enclosed area is a preserved part of the original
African Burial Ground